

TODAY'S MILITARY SMALLER, LESS CAPABLE, OVERWORKED AND LESS READY THAN 8 YEARS AGO

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, last week Vice President GORE mislead every American again. I am not talking about raising chickens. AL GORE claimed that our military is the strongest in history. Our military is the best in the world today, but it is simply not true that our military today is the strongest in history, not even by recent history.

One only has to look back to the 1980s to find a military force 40 percent larger, with a much more robust capacity that could easily have engaged two major threats on two separate fronts at once. Today, the Joint Chiefs tell us that fighting two fronts could only be accomplished with high risk and significant loss of life.

Looking back at World War II, the United States fielded an Army of over 8 million soldiers and airmen. The United States was fighting on three separate fronts in three separate geographical areas of the world, and we were winning all three.

It is laughable to consider today's force equal. If AL GORE believes today's military is the best in history, he obviously has not talked to thousands of soldiers, airman and Marines who are leaving in total frustration.

By any measure, today's military is smaller, less capable, overworked and less ready than it was 8 years ago. Anyone aspiring to be Commander in Chief should know that.

#### CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4205, FLOYD D. SPENCE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 616 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 616

*Resolved*, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 4205) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2001, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which

I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, only yesterday the Committee on Rules met and granted a normal conference report rule for H.R. 4205, the Fiscal Year 2001 Department of Defense Authorization Act.

The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration.

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In addition, the rule provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

This should not be a controversial rule. It is the type of rule that we grant for every conference report that we consider in the House.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, this should not be a controversial bill. Once and for all, we are taking care of military retirees by giving them TRICARE for life and by improving their prescription drug benefit. Our military retirees were promised lifetime health care coverage when they enlisted, and so it is about time that we fulfilled our promise to them.

Also, at long last, we are taking care of our men and women in uniform. We are getting them off of food stamps and out of substandard housing.

Finally, we are providing for our Nation's general welfare by giving our military the tools they need to win on the battlefield.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and to support the underlying bill. Now more than ever we must provide for our national security.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and in support of the conference report. Mr. Speaker, this conference report provides the authorization for the Department of Defense in fiscal year 2001 and, in doing so, it provides for the defense of the United States and for the defense of freedom and democracy around the world.

This conference report ensures that our military forces continue to be second to none, and it ensures that now and in the future our forces will be able to meet the demands of every mission they are assigned.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report addresses the real needs and the real priorities of our Nation's armed services and is, therefore, a conference agreement that every Member of this body should support. But at the same time, every Member should be aware that meeting these needs and priorities comes at a price. I happen to be one who believes the price of defending our Nation and ensuring peace around the world is one worth paying.

This conference report authorizes \$310 billion in spending for the Department of Defense and its programs, addressing shortfalls in readiness, funding in modernization programs, and

improving the quality of life for our military personnel and their families.

Mr. Speaker, no one can argue the fact that our military stands second to none in the world. No campaign rhetoric can truthfully say that our Armed Forces are not up to the job. But there is no denying the fact that improvement of readiness capabilities and continuing modernization are constant requirements to ensure that we do not fall into a condition that would find us shorthanded in an emergency.

All that requires money, money that must come from a Federal budget with hundreds of competing interests. We must remember that education for our children is also a national priority, that protecting Social Security and Medicare and providing a Medicare prescription drug benefit for senior citizens is a national priority, and that reducing the national debt should continue to be a national priority.

Americans understand this, and they know full well the folly of cutting taxes while increasing spending. I would remind my colleagues in this House that we have gone down that road before. I am committed to ensuring that our Armed Forces are the best trained, best equipped, and the most ready in all the world. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that those forces are protecting a Nation that has other pressing needs. Let us not shortchange our military, our children, or our senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report contains many important provisions, but chief among them is one that keeps a promise made to the men and women who have chosen the military as a career and have served faithfully and well for 20 years or more.

When I am back home in my district in Texas, I often have the opportunity to meet with some of the many military retirees who live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and, more often than not, they raise the issue of the lifetime health care they were promised when they chose to make the military a career.

Cuts in the military budget and base closings have decreased the number of facilities where military retirees can go to receive health care. Even if those facilities are available, they must often wait far too long to see a doctor.

At the beginning of this Congress, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), two Democratic Members, offered comprehensive plans to address these inequities in the military health care system for those men and women who have dedicated their careers to defending our country.

Mr. Speaker, while what is in this conference agreement falls short of the original proposals made by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), I am gratified that this conference report restores to military retirees benefits they were promised and in doing so begins to make good on